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The New Reformism

THE EDITORS

The Civil War in Lebanon

SAMIH FARSOUN
AND WALTER CARROLL

Against Cynicism in Politics and Culture

NORMAN DIAMOND

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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

The article on Lebanon in this month's issue is a good deal longer than the norm for MR articles. We made this exception in view of the extremely complicated situation in the Middle East, and the need, expressed by many readers in recent months, for an historical analysis intelligible to radicals in the West. We believe that Farsoun and Carroll's article fills this need. Readers should keep in mind that it was completed some two months before publication and that some of the details may now be out of date.

Beginning last November we have been running a mail-order promotion campaign to expand MR's circulation. Naturally we have not sent the solicitation material to our own subscribers, but most of you are probably on one or more of the lists we have mailed to and so have received copies anyway. You will therefore be interested to know that as of May 19 the campaign has resulted in signing up 2,630 new subscribers. Considering that the total number of subscribers in November when the campaign started was around 8,000 (this does not include newsstand and bookstore sales), it will be seen that this represents an

(Continued on inside back cover)

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THE NEW REFORMISM

With the Italian election scheduled at about the time this issue should be reaching readers, it may be appropriate to try to analyze and put in historical perspective some of the recent developments on the European political scene.

The Western European CPs, with the Italians in the lead, have been driving hard in the last few years to increase their voting strength (parliamentary in Italy, presidential in France) to the point where they can successfully claim a share in governmental power. To this end they have felt the need to change their political "image" from that of a pro-Soviet and anti-democratic party bent on establishing a "dictatorship of the proletariat" to that of a nationalistic and democratic party bound by the normal rules of the electoral game. The most important of these rules, of course, is that whoever gets into power by electoral means can also be put out by electoral means. Put otherwise, the first rule of the game is that all the players agree in advance not to try to change the rules. What this means in effect is that the CPs are trying to convince voters that in the future they will model themselves on the Labor Party in Britain and the Social Democratic parties in the Northern European countries, most of which have been in and out of governments several times in the period since the Second World War.

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Do they mean it? This is the first question asked by traditional anti-Communists, not only because they are probably in doubt about the answer but also because raising and emphasizing questions about the genuineness of the Communists' conversion to bourgeois democracy may be the best way of scaring off potential voters for the CPs. But it is the kind of question to which no one can give a satisfactory answer. Political promises may be and often are made without the slightest intent to keep them. On the other hand, even those which arise from a sincere desire to carry them out may be broken. What is required is not an effort, largely doomed to futility in any case, to uncover subjective intentions and wishes but rather a serious analysis of the objective situation in which the Western European CPs (and some other CPs around the world, most notably the Japanese) find themselves. This will give us a far better basis for judging how they are likely to act than any amount of mind-reading.

Here a brief recital of some familiar facts from an earlier period of European history can be helpful. Durable socialist parties began emerging in Western Europe during the 1860s and 1870s. The German Social Democratic Party (SPD), unifying two separate movements at the famous Gotha congress in 1875, early established itself as the largest and most influential of these parties, and it held this position right up to the First World War. Among the reasons for its pre-eminence, two were perhaps decisive: the accelerated industrialization of Germany with a consequent rapid growth of its working class; and the role of Marx and Engels as inspirers, elder statesmen, and advisers. The two groups that united at Gotha were the Lassalleans and the so-called Eisenachers (after the town where their founding convention was held), the latter under the leadership of Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, who considered themselves loyal followers of Marx. The compromise program adopted at Gotha was basically Lassallean and came under heavy criticism from Marx in a document which was not published at the time but which later became famous as *The Critique of the Gotha Program*. As the new party grew, the influence of Marxist ideas steadily expanded while that of Lassalle's declined, and the need for a revised program soon

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became evident. During the 1880s, however, the SPD was outlawed and no national congresses could be held, so the first opportunity to adopt a new program came at the Erfurt congress in 1891. In the history of the socialist movement the Erfurt Program is only a little less famous than its predecessor at Gotha, but for a different reason. Now for the first time the SPD openly embraced Marxism and in a form which had the hearty approval of Engels. In a letter to Sorge, Engels wrote: "Kautsky's draft program, supported by Bebel and me, was taken as the foundation of the Program's theoretical part. We have the satisfaction that Marx's critique has completely won out."*

Ironically, at just about the time the SPD was adopting an orthodox Marxist program and becoming something of a model for the whole international socialist movement, *in practice* it was becoming more and more reformist. Georg von Vollmar, leader of the Bavarian wing of the party who had been a revolutionary in his youth, was the first prominent member of the party to take a reformist stand in opposition to the national leadership in Berlin; and in 1896, the year after Engels' death, Eduard Bernstein, who had spent the years of illegality in England, published the famous tract (English title: *Evolutionary Socialism*) which provided an ideological foundation for the party's increasingly reformist practice. This does not mean that the party officially abandoned the stance adopted at Erfurt. On paper it remained a revolutionary party; and its best known theorists, whether of the left like Rosa Luxemburg or of the center like Karl Kautsky, continued to write (and be internationally regarded) as orthodox Marxists.

The marriage of revolutionary words and reformist deeds of course fell apart with the coming of the First World War, quintessentially an imperialist conflict. The SPD, like most of the other European socialist parties, joined its own bourgeoisie not only in fighting the war but also in opposing the Russian Revolution which was the one positive result of the bloodbath. At the end of the war the party, again like most of the other

* Quoted in Gustav Mayer, *Friedrich Engels: Eine Biographie* (The Hague, 1934), vol. 2, p. 487.

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socialist parties, split, with the radical wing forming the German Communist Party (KPD). The SPD itself, under the leadership of men like Scheidemann and Ebert and Noske, played a crucial role in defeating the German revolution in 1918. Thereafter the party's reformism in practice was increasingly matched by revisionism in theory: Kautsky and Hilferding, who had been among the leading Marxist theorists of the prewar period, no longer even pretended to be revolutionaries, and the party participated in coalition governments under the Weimar Republic along with bourgeois parties of the center and right. Suppressed and decimated by the Nazis, the SPD re-emerged after the Second World War, jettisoned its Marxist heritage as an embarrassing encumbrance, and took its place (similar to that of its British and Scandinavian counterparts) as a leading contender for the honor of steering German capitalism on its return journey to the top of the imperialist heap.

A full analysis of this odyssey from would-be overthrower of capitalism to major participant in the political management of capitalism would fill, and indeed already has filled, many volumes. Here we want only to stress that the common practice of "explaining" what happened as the result of the treachery of certain groups and/or individuals (or, from another point of view, their pragmatism and good sense) really explains nothing. What were the socio-economic forces and pressures forming and impinging on these groups and individuals? What were the realistic options open to them? What would be the consequences of their choosing among these options one way rather than another? In asking and trying to answer questions like these we have necessarily to confront the history of capitalism as it actually unfolded during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth.

For our present purposes the focus of course has to be Germany, a rising imperialist power, ready and able to benefit from the international system of unequal exchange between the developed capitalist center and its underdeveloped periphery, and moving toward a showdown with Britain (and, to a lesser extent, other imperialist powers) for hegemony in the global system. The natural complement in the political realm to this underlying situation was a welfare-warfare state aiming to co-

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opt and control the country's productive classes, and particularly its growing industrial proletariat. The first efforts in this direction, under Bismarck's leadership, were contradictory. On the one hand a series of enactments outlawing the SPD and the trade unions were passed (lasting from 1878 to 1890), and on the other hand Germany became the first capitalist country to begin to set up a comprehensive system of social security.

When the attempted suppression of the working-class organizations began to show signs of being counterproductive, it was abandoned. The SPD and the unions, having regained the right to exist and organize, set about winning for their members a share in the prosperity of the burgeoning German economy. Thanks to their own strong organizations and a paternalistic state able to tap growing reservoirs of surplus value (both directly extracted from domestic labor and transferred from the periphery of the capitalist system), the German workers in fact fared well by capitalist standards in the quarter century before the First World War. And a part of the process, partaking of both cause and effect, was the proliferation of large political (party) and economic (trade-union) bureaucracies firmly rooted in the existing socio-economic order. Under these conditions, many (perhaps most) of the workers perceived it to be in their interest to continue struggling to widen their gains within the framework of the existing system, while the party and trade-union bureaucracies, which as time passed acquired more and more power in their respective organizations, actually formed integral parts of this system, their very existence and livelihood being tied to its continuing operation. What an English left-wing journalist recently wrote about the Labor Party could equally well be said about the old German SPD: it should not be thought that it was opposed to the class struggle; the only thing it was opposed to was ending the class struggle.

Against this background the increasingly reformist character of the SPD surely requires no special explanation. Both its membership and its cadres were being pushed in that direction by forces which for the time being were enormously powerful. The surviving radicals in the party, like Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, could be tolerated and even capitalized

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upon, as long as a significant part of the rank and file maintained an allegiance to revolutionary Marxism. But when the chips were down, as during the First World War, they were dispensable: the schism in the socialist movement which up to then had been only latent had to come into the open. The sheep are separated from the goats, the revolutionaries from the reformists, and never the twain shall meet.

Never? Well, anyway not for a long time. The crisis of European society which followed the First World War and the Russian Revolution led to a renaissance of revolutionary Marxism, inspired and led by the Russian Bolsheviks and tightly organized in the Communist (or Third) International. For a few years it seemed possible that proletarian revolutions would sweep all of Europe. But outside the Soviet Union capitalism survived and by the mid-20s had stabilized itself. The European Communist parties now entered a difficult period: revolution remained the goal, but no revolutionary situations materialized. As the threat of fascism grew, beginning in Italy in the early 1920s, the CPs alternated between a frenetic revolutionism and a defensive anti-fascist united or popular frontism. Neither strategy worked, and during the 1930s fascism gradually spread over the European continent. The Second World War brought an end to this chapter of European history: the Communist movement which had emerged from the First World War seemed to have been all but wiped out—its leaders assassinated, rotting in concentration camps, or living in impotent exile in the USSR; its surviving rank and file merged into isolated national movements of resistance to Nazi domination.

But like a phoenix rising from the ashes, the European Communist parties came back to life again at the end of the Second World War. Ideologically and programatically they represented a continuation of the prewar movement; in practice their policies once again wavered between (largely verbal) revolutionism and various updated forms of frontism. Which of these tendencies would win out could only be finally decided by the actual post-Second World War course of European capitalism. It is arguable, though of course not provable, that if world, and hence also European, capitalism had relapsed into the crisis condition of the 1930s, as many expected at the

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time, the CPs would have developed a revolutionary practice to match their inherited revolutionary theory. But of course this is not what happened. The United States stepped forward as the universal protector (and boss) of capitalism, inaugurating a quarter-century-long period of expansionism of which the countries of the industrialized capitalist centers were the chief beneficiaries. Under these circumstances the Western European CPs faced a situation very similar to that faced by the German SPD when it emerged from illegality in 1890: regardless of their ideology, they were irresistibly propelled toward a strategy of representing and leading the workers in their day-to-day struggles for economic gains and social reforms within the framework of the existing system. And, as in the earlier German case, this strategy had a very powerful logic of its own. On the one hand, it implied the *continuing* existence of the system, and on the other hand it meant building up vast (overlapping) party and trade-union bureaucracies, the personnel of which had a direct interest in the preservation of the economic and political relations which provided the *raison d'être* for their jobs and incomes. How far this has gone by now in the case of Italy is suggested by certain facts recently reported in the *New York Times*: six of Italy's 20 regions, more than 40 of its 92 provinces, and all the major cities north of Rome are under left-wing control, which means in nearly all instances straight Communist or joint Communist-Socialist.

That a working-class party following this strategy in the historical context of post-Second World War European capitalism would have, sooner or later, to adjust its ideology and program to its actual practice seems obvious.* And indeed this process of adjustment began a long time ago, assuming different forms according to the particular historical experiences of the countries concerned. The reason these matters have been so much in the news lately is simply that the Italian and French CPs have by now reached the point alluded to at the outset of this piece, i.e., where they feel a share of national govern-

* In the case of the Spanish and Portuguese CPs we would have to say "aspiring to follow this strategy," which implies as a preliminary the necessity to get rid of Europe's last two remaining fascist dictatorships.

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mental power is within their grasp, provided they can get rid of their reputation as dangerous revolutionaries and/or Soviet agents.* To be sure they have not thrown out Marxism altogether, as the German Social Democrats did after the Second World War. In this respect their present position is more analogous to that of the SPD after the First World War: they continue to pay lip service to Marxism, but it is a thoroughly denatured Marxism which has been completely purged of its revolutionary essence. Given the fact that the prestige and influence of Marxism are growing all around the world, there seems to be no reason why the CPs should follow the Social Democrats in totally renouncing their Marxist heritage. In its denatured form it should scare no one and might attract some.

There are those who might agree with the gist of our argument up to this point but who nevertheless entertain doubts about what the Italian or French CP would do if they actually got control of the government. Might they not then enact reforms radical enough to frighten the capitalists, domestic and international, and thus precipitate a potentially disastrous crisis? And if this should happen, what guarantee is there that they would not abrogate constitutional processes and seek to deal with the crisis by dictatorial methods?

The first question can best be answered by what might be appropriately called Engels' Law, which has been quoted in this space on an earlier occasion. "All governments," Engels wrote to Danielson on June 18, 1892, "be they ever so absolute, are *en dernier lieu* [in the final analysis] but the executors of the economic necessities of the national situation. They may do this in various ways, good, bad, and indifferent; they may ac-

* It is relevant here to recall an anecdote told to us by the late Paul Baran on his return from a trip to Europe, probably around 1960. While in Rome he had a long discussion (in Russian) with Togliatti, the head of the Italian CP. Baran asked questions which indicated skepticism about the compatibility of the Italian CP's electoral and parliamentary tactics with the Marxist-Leninist theory of state and revolution. Togliatti answered with another question. It's all well and good, Togliatti said, for you, living in the United States where there is no significant working-class party, to talk about revolution. But what would you do if you were in my place, responsible for a mass party which the workers expect to represent their interests in the here and now? Baran admitted that he had no satisfactory answer.

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celerate or retard the economic development and its political and juridical consequences, but in the long run they must follow it." In the supposed situation, the "economic necessities of the national situation" would be quite simply to maintain or create conditions in which capitalism could continue to operate in a reasonably normal fashion. In other words, if a Communist Party assumes political responsibility for governing a capitalist country, even one with a substantial state-owned sector, it must do the best it can to see that profits keep flowing in quantities satisfactory to the capitalists and that profitable investment opportunities remain open.

It must be admitted of course that even with the best will in the world a CP government might not be able to meet these responsibilities. The capitalists, even if not confronted by radical reforms, might go on strike, perhaps with the deliberate intention of bringing the government down. If that should happen, the disastrous crisis would come anyway, and the question whether the CP might not be tempted to resort to dictatorial methods remains relevant. But this question inevitably gives rise to another: Could the Communists do it even if they wanted to? And the answer in the assumed case, i.e., that the CP had come to office via the electoral route, is definitely no. For no one can exercise dictatorial power without disposing over the requisite armed force, which in the present context obviously means the army and the police. If the history of the last couple of decades—most recently and dramatically in Chile—proves anything, it is that whatever constitutions may say, control over the repressive apparatus of the state is and remains in the hands of the established ruling class unless and until it is wrested away by armed struggle. Since the CPs in question have not engaged in armed struggle and do not propose to,* there is no way they could get control of enough armed force to institute a dictatorial regime. The threat of a dictatorship as a way out of a serious crisis in fact comes not from the Com-

* An anonymous spokesman for the Spanish CP, interviewed by *New York Times* correspondent Henry Kamm in Barcelona, goes so far as to say that Communists "have never, never been partisans of armed struggle." (*Times*, May 10, 1976) Such deliberate rewriting of history is of course not a monopoly of Communists.

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munists but from the right. The Communists are fully aware of this and have drawn the logical conclusion. If they get into power, they must do everything they can to prevent a crisis. If they do not succeed in preventing a crisis, they must be ready to be ejected from the government by normal constitutional means. To pursue any other course, given the assumptions on which they are operating, would be to invite a violent fascist counter-revolution. *This is precisely the lesson the Western European CPs have drawn from the Chilean experience.**

If our analysis is correct, it follows that, as of now at any rate, capitalists in Italy, where the problem is most immediate, have little to fear from Communist electoral gains. The contrary may be closer to the truth: those capitalists, said to be numerous, who believe that Italy's present economic difficulties can be overcome only with the help of Communists in the government could well be right. And in any case the probability that the Italian CP, once in the government, would change the rules of the game to assure their continuation in office is close to zero. The Communist leaders believe that the present rules of the game favor them: they have no interest in changing them.

In conclusion we may ask how CP electoral advances are likely to affect the revolutionary Marxist movement in Italy. Apart from particular Italian conditions which outsiders are hardly in a position to evaluate, it seems to us that CP gains, leading sooner or later to participation in the government, should greatly help to clarify a situation which is probably very confusing to many people, Communists and non-Communists alike. If, as we believe, the traditional Communist parties in the core capitalist countries have in fact gone the way of the

* A corollary is that no attempt to move toward socialism should be undertaken unless conditions are so overwhelmingly favorable as to render opposition virtually impossible. What these conditions might be have not, so far as we know, been spelled out: presumably they would include at a minimum not only solid support in public opinion but also a deep enough division in the armed forces to make them unusable for counter-revolutionary purposes. A recent Chilean visitor to Rome reports that in a discussion with the leader of the Italian CP the latter summed up this line of thought with the formula: "Fifty-one percent is not enough." Eduard Bernstein could well have agreed.

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Social Democrats, then it is all to the good that this should be clearly demonstrated and understood. One no longer castigates the Social Democrats for betraying Marxism—you cannot betray what is foreign to you—and it is high time the reformist/revisionist CPs were put in the same category. It should then be possible to get on with the difficult, urgent, and no doubt very lengthy task of reconstituting revolutionary Marxism on a solid foundation.

(May 11, 1976)

Science was for Marx a historically dynamic, revolutionary force. However great the joy with which he welcomed a new discovery in some theoretical science whose practical application perhaps it was as yet quite impossible to envisage, he experienced quite another kind of joy when the discovery involved immediate revolutionary changes in industry, and in historical development in general. . . .

For Marx was before all else a revolutionist. His real mission in life was to contribute, in one way or another, to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the state institutions which it had brought into being, to contribute to the liberation of the modern proletariat, which he was the first to make conscious of its own position and its needs, conscious of the conditions of its emancipation. Fighting was his element. And he fought with a passion, a tenacity, and a success such as few could rival. . . .

And, consequently, Marx was the best hated and most calumniated man of his time. Governments, both absolutist and republican, deported him from their territories. Bourgeois, whether conservative or ultra-democratic, vied with one another in heaping slanders on him. All this he brushed aside as though it were cobweb, ignoring it, answering only when extreme necessity compelled him. And he died beloved, revered, and mourned by millions of fellow workers—from the mines of Siberia to California, in all parts of Europe and America—and I make bold to say that though he may have had many opponents he had hardly one personal enemy.

—From Friedrich Engels' speech at the graveside of Karl Marx, March 17, 1883

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THE CIVIL WAR IN LEBANON:
Sect, Class, and Imperialism

BY SAMIH FARSOUN AND
WALTER CARROLL

In April 1975, a savage civil war suddenly exploded in Lebanon, "the only stable Arab democracy" in the Middle East, according to Western academics. During the following thirteen months an intermittent but devastating armed conflict has caused around 18,000 deaths, over 45,000 wounded, and more than $10 billion in property damage; it has dislocated and immiserated tens of thousands of people, and paralyzed and nearly destroyed a once thriving economy. Over the months as it spread throughout the country, Lebanon's civil war threatened to involve Syria, Israel, and other outside powers, leading perhaps to a fifth Arab-Israeli war.

The sources of this upheaval are both social and internal, political and international. The social-economic crisis which has been gathering momentum in the country since the second half of the 1950s intensified rapidly in the 1970s. Externally,

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American-Israeli and Arab pressures for a "political solution" in the Middle East in the wake of the October 1973 war are directed at the armed Palestinian organizations based in Lebanon. Apart from the ineffective and varied dissent of Libya, Iraq, and Algeria to Kissinger's "peace initiative," the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the other Palestinian organizations forming the "Rejectionist Front" based in Lebanon have been the only real obstacle to a new and very lucrative neocolonial Pax Americana in the Middle East.

In this region, social class struggles are invariably enmeshed in anti-imperialist national struggles, especially in the liberation of Palestine from Zionism. The interlocking of the two kinds of struggle has given the Lebanese civil war its savage character and its international significance. Also in Lebanon, social and political contradictions have long manifested themselves in a peculiar twist: religious sectarianism and sectarian conflict.[1]*

Sectarianism: The Historical and Imperialist Heritage

The presence historically of varied religious sects in the small republic of Lebanon is due to its topographical characteristics and geographical location. In the center of the old-world trade routes, the high and rugged Mt. Lebanon provided a haven for many of the dissident and heretical sects of Christianity and Islam, including Christian Maronites (an independent eastern sect) and later the Druze (an Islamic splinter sect), from the successive empires in the region: Byzantine, Arab, Mameluke, and Ottoman. Over the years, the clan organization there gave way to a feudal tax-farming system (*iqta'a*) which paid tribute to despotic Ottoman overlords. The seeds of sectarianism were planted in the nineteenth century in the process of socio-political transformations surrounding the decline of "feudalism" and the development, because of European imperialist intervention, of dependent capitalism in the region. In the nineteenth century, the Emir of Lebanon, nominally a vassal of the Ottoman Empire and of Ibrahim

* Notes will be found at the end of the article.

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Pasha, the Egyptian conqueror of greater Syria, introduced policies which undermined the *muqati'ji* feudal class to the advantage of the peasantry and the central control of the Emir.[2] The peasantry as well as the Maronite Church, which had large landholdings, prospered. The Maronites joined forces with the Emir and Ibrahim Pasha, while the Druze resisted both, in alliance with the Ottomans. By 1840 Maronite-Druze political conflict led to a sectarian massacre.

European intervention in the region has been a critical factor in the encouragement and institutionalization of sectarianism in both its socio-economic and political forms. French-Maronite collaboration extends from the twelfth-century Crusades, during which the Maronites became the local allies of the Frankish invaders. However, modern European penetration of the Arab East extends from the sixteenth century, through a series of trade agreements known as capitulations.[3] Originally grants of special trading privileges by the Sultan to European powers, the capitulations became "rights" as the Ottoman empire grew weaker. Among the privileges acquired by the European powers was the right to protect and regulate in their consular courts the legal affairs of their citizens resident in the Ottoman empire. By the eighteenth century this right of protection was extended to all Arab Christians, as well as to the Druze. France claimed rights of protection over Maronites and other Catholics, Tsarist Russia over Arab Christians of the Greek Orthodox persuasion, while Britain claimed protection over the Druze. These claims to protection were a powerful wedge with which European powers intervened in, and came to dominate, the Near East. The European Concert—France, Britain, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Prussia—also acted collectively:

> The first important group action with regard to Lebanon took place in 1842. After Britain and France had done some hard bargaining with the Ottoman government in the interest of their respective protegé communities, the Concert adopted in May of that year the partition scheme (partitioning Mt. Lebanon into Maronite and Druze districts) that was to be put into effect the following year.[4]

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The separate Druze and Maronite Governorates were each administered by a sectarian governor aided by a council of selectmen representing the other sects and responsible for civil and criminal jurisdiction, tax assessment, and other activities which had been the functions of *muqati'ji* lords.

Between 1840 and 1860, the economic and administrative changes brought to Mt. Lebanon encouraged further the emergent processes of sectarianism in socio-political institutions, and of class struggles between peasants and *muqati'ji* lords. These changes also coincided with the Ottoman *Tanzimat* reforms, an attempt to liberalize and rationalize the empire's political economy. This democratic and liberal trend, which actually began in 1830 under Egyptian occupation, gathered momentum and increasingly sharpened the contradictory interests of the peasantry and their feudal overlords.[5] In 1858 Maronite peasants in the mountain district of Kesrouan rose against their Maronite *muqati'ji* lords and established self-controlled communes. The institution of *iqta'a* was under attack and the Druze *muqati'jis* prepared to come to the aid of their Maronite counterparts. However, the peasant revolt soon spread into the Druze areas, where it pitted Maronite peasants against Druze lords. By 1860-1861 this class struggle was successfully turned into a new religious war, as Druze lords rallied their own people, peasant and artisan, against Christian peasants and villages. This short war quickly turned into another massacre, and the European powers intervened anew. The new political arrangement—a single mountain province ruled directly by an Ottoman appointee and assisted by a council representing each sect proportionally—put Lebanon on a firm basis of sectarian politics.

This structure remained essentially unchanged until the installation of the French Mandate in 1918 at the close of the First World War. The Sykes-Picot treaty divided up the Arab east between France and Great Britain, which proceeded to Balkanize the region into religious states. France attempted to establish three sectarian states—the Alawi in the north, the Druze in the south, and Sunni Muslims in the center—in a federal Syria, while a Christian state was being created in Mt.

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Lebanon. Further south, the British promised the European Zionists a "Jewish homeland" in Palestine.[6] Arab nationalist resistance to these plans failed. Maronite leaders in collaboration with the French successfully carved out an independent Lebanon from greater Syria. In 1926, the French expanded Mt. Lebanon in an easterly direction by adding the inter-mountain valley of the *Biqa'a,* and in a westerly direction by adding the coast, thus creating Grand Liban or the modern Republic of Lebanon. As a result, large numbers of Sunni and Shia Muslims were added to the population of the country, and the relative sizes of the sects shifted: after the Maronites, the largest became the Sunnis followed by the Shias.

From the start of the mandatory regime, France emphasized religious, sectarian, and ethnic distinctions, cultivating them against Islam and Arab nationalism, the principal fount of anti-imperialism in the area. In Lebanon, the formal reinstatement of sectarian socio-political institutions was begun by France in 1922. Despite much popular and organized resistance from the Muslims, especially in the newly added areas, the French were able to secure Lebanon's new territories and institutionalize sectarianism in the form of a Chamber of Deputies or Parliament with proportional sectarian representation. France also encouraged the creation of a chief cleric, as a sectarian communal spokesman, a *Mufti* each among the Sunnis and Shias and a *Sheikh Al-'Aql* among the Druze, sects which did not have a clerical hierarchy as did the Christian churches. Even Armenians, refugees from the Turkish pogroms of the early 1920s, received clerical and parliamentary representation. France also supported the practice of reserving the powerful presidency and the army command for Maronites. This practice was institutionalized in the "National Pact," a gentlemen's agreement, not a law, between Maronite and Sunni leaders in 1943 at the time of the independence struggle against Vichy France—a movement that was led by the national bourgeoisie of the principal sects. The terms of that agreement also included reserving the post of prime minister for a Sunni Muslim, and that of head of parliament for a Shia Muslim. In addition, cabinet ministries were also to include

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representatives of the other major sects: Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Druze. Based on the practice of the mandate period, all political appointments were made in the ratio of six to five in favor of the Christians, who were supposed to have been the majority according to the last, French-conducted census in 1932.

This sectarian system is still in existence today.[7] Along with political sectarianism, strong social, educational, welfare, and familial sectarian institutions remained or have been reinforced since independence. Thus Lebanon's socio-political system emphasizes vertical sectarian and regional loyalties over both national and class-based loyalties. These parochial loyalties have therefore been a major obstacle to the development of working-class consciousness and to a nationalism antipathetic to Western imperialism.[8] At the same time most of the Maronites and many of the other Arab Christians saw collaboration with Western powers as not only economically beneficial for them as compradores, but also as a safeguard against Islamic and/or Arab national power. Sectarianism and its institutions have therefore emerged as local allies of Western imperialism in contradiction to anti-imperialist secular Arab nationalism and to Islam, which often reinforced the latter.

Economic and Class Transformations

European economic penetration of the Arab East arrested whatever potential indigenous capitalist development there was. By the second half of the nineteenth century the Arab East was well on the road to underdevelopment. Artisan and manufacture production had nearly disappeared as the region became a market for cheap European goods and an exporter of raw materials such as cotton, silk, tobacco, cereals, and dried fruits. In particular, Mt. Lebanon became a producer and exporter of raw silk to France. Small independent Christian, especially Maronite, farmers prospered in the north; while the cereal- and tobacco-producing semi-feudal Shia and Sunni regions in the south and east fared less well. In the port city of Beirut, Christian, especially Greek Orthodox, export-import merchants grew wealthy. This economic boom came to a halt

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in the 1890s as sericulture, the silk business, collapsed. Consequently, Lebanese mountain farmers and peasants migrated in large numbers to the Western hemisphere, especially the United States.[9]

The establishment of the French mandate system after the First World War further encouraged the development of underdevelopment and the creation of dependent capitalism. The new Lebanon rapidly became an entrepôt and a center of transshipment for Western goods and for the raw materials exported to Europe. French and other European capital investment built, operated, and profited from many infrastructural enterprises including the port, railroads, tramways, and utilities. Local industry, even import-substitution, hardly existed. In agriculture, the French established a tobacco monopoly, and although they again encouraged silk growing, sericulture never returned to its former prominence. As a consequence of these developments, a strong compradore class of agents, representatives, and functionaries of Western capital emerged. It was mostly, although not totally, Christian. This class became allied with a successful import-export merchant class, and with the semi-feudal landlords, mostly descendants of the old *muqati'ji* families, who were turning slowly to commercial export-oriented agriculture. Along with the French mandate authorities who protected French capitalist interests, these three segments—compradores, merchants, and landlords—became the ruling class of Lebanon. Largely from among them, deputies to the French-instituted sectarian parliament were elected. Until the present, either the same persons or their sons continue to dominate politics and win elections to the parliament. The Lebanese left describes this system as "political feudalism."

The French mandatory authorities and the Lebanese ruling class built a state apparatus which favored Western capitalist investment and dependent capitalism. During the mandate period—between the two world wars—most people in the country remained peasants, variously integrated into the local and international markets. However, the beginnings of a services-based middle class and a wage-working class, particularly in transport and communications, developed. Beirut city began to grow rapidly. The white-collar urban class grew largely

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with the growth of Western, especially French, investments. In part because they were favored, and partly because they spoke the language of the foreigner, this middle class was principally Christian, including Maronite. Thus this class also felt strong sympathy towards Western imperialist interests and culture.[10]

Lebanese economic growth during the mandate remained quite modest, and suffered with the Western depression until independence in 1943, the Second World War, and its aftermath. In 1948, the destruction of Palestine and the rise of Israel had a profound impact on Lebanon. To begin with, close to 200,000 Palestinian refugees, both Christian and Muslim, took refuge in the country. More importantly, at this point Lebanon inherited all of Palestine's regional economic functions. The closing of the port of Haifa diverted all Western trade to Beirut, the oil pipelines and termini were diverted too, and new ones (Aramco) were established in the country. Banking and other service functions also shifted to the Lebanese capital, while the tourist business for the Holy Land was routed through Lebanon and Jordan. Above all, the postwar oil boom in the Arabian peninsula and gulf expanded all these trends at a breathtaking pace, especially as anti-imperialist Syria and Nasserist Egypt closed their doors to Western interests.

A type of "compradore capitalism" suited to the region flourished in Lebanon. A phenomenal economic boom and an international cosmopolitanism ensued in Beirut and the nearby mountain districts, mostly Maronite. The capital inflow to Lebanon from the Arabian oil zones created a strong dynamism in the banking sector, which strengthened the rest of the economy, especially real estate. In addition, there developed a vigorous sector of the high-level technical design, accounting, advertising, and management services oriented to the oil-producing areas. Western, especially American, banks and other corporations established regional headquarters in Beirut, employed numerous Lebanese, and helped promote the hotel and tourist business. Large-scale triangular trade businesses linking the West with the oil areas were based in Beirut.

By the mid-1960s a severely lopsided economic structure had developed in which two thirds of Lebanon's national in-

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come was generated in the services sector which involved no more than a third of the total labor force.[11] Indeed, the overwhelming part of the income generated by this sector was in the form of profit to banks, mostly foreign-owned, and other service enterprises.[12] While the services sector boomed, the agrarian and industrial sectors stagnated. Two thirds of the country's labor force worked in these two productive sectors—nearly 50 percent in agriculture—but combined they generated no more than 30 percent of the GNP.[13] As a result rural per capita income was $166 per year, while that of the urban elite was $3,680 in the 1960s.[14] A government-commissioned study of development prospects noted the wealth distribution in the country in 1960: 4 percent rich, 14 percent well-to-do, 32 percent moderate income, and 50 percent poor and miserable.[15] In fact, most of those with "moderate incomes" relied heavily on remittances from kinsfolk working abroad in Arabian oil areas or the West. Despite the sizable growth of a services-based middle class, the main social trend in the country was toward polarization into a few rich and vast numbers of poor, into compradore capitalism and subproletarianization.

Lebanon's *laissez-tout-faire* capitalist boom came to a halt in 1966-1967, signaled by the crash of its biggest native-owned bank, IntraBank. Ever since, Lebanon has been experiencing a structural economic crisis.[16] Growth in its services sector leveled off and the real-estate sector experienced wild fluctuations. Banks exported monetary surpluses for investment overseas, generally to Europe. Even the tourist business declined with the Israeli occupation of the holy places in Palestine in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Some investment did go into industries both in the rural and urban areas, but the agricultural and industrial growth in the 1965-1975 decade was insufficient to absorb the capital surpluses available in Lebanese banks. In the rural areas, export-oriented latifundios of citrus and other fruits increased as did chicken and egg farming, all destined for the Arabian oil-zone markets. In the urban areas, light export-oriented and some import-substitution industries flourished. The ensuing crisis was characterized by stagnation in the expansion of the services sector and by limited growth in the productive sectors.[17] These trends meant that the

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economy could not absorb the large and increasing numbers of people of all skill levels seeking jobs.

Social Consequences of "Compradore Capitalism"

Lebanon's rapid economic transformations, derived from its regional compradore functions over the past two decades, triggered and/or sharpened social-political contradictions in the country. To begin with, the growth of latifundios and other agrarian enterprises displaced an estimated half million peasants from the land. These flocked to Beirut and settled in the eastern suburban slums. There they were joined by other peasants, estimated at 200,000, who fled from Israel's repeated bombings and scorched-earth policy in southern Lebanon. These urbanized and subproletarianized peasants tended to be Shia and, secondarily, Sunni Muslims. Most of the people who remained in the rural areas were transformed into a rural proletariat or into seasonal laborers working on the new commercial enterprises.[18] Some of the urban immigrants also became an unskilled industrial proletariat in and around the major cities of Beirut, Zahle, and Tripoli.

While the majority of the Shia and Sunni peasantry from the south and east (and to a lesser extent the peasantry of other sects) became either proletarianized or subproletarianized, the Maronite, Greek Orthodox, and Greek Catholic peasantry of central and northern Mt. Lebanon became petty bourgeois or aspired to that status. The latter's land increased enormously in value through speculation, or was turned into exurbia of the rich, summer rental properties and businesses, or fruit orchards. These petty bourgeois Maronites and to a lesser extent other Christians used, as did other capitalists, cheap Syrian immigrant, Palestinian, and Shia workers. The more established middle and rich peasantry educated their children to become functionaries, managers, professionals, and contractors heavily dependent on Western corporate interests. It is from among these that some of the leaders of the rightist organizations emerged.

The class transformations and social polarization in Lebanon were characterized by a measure of sectarianism and

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religion. However, the degree of coincidence of class and sect (or religion) with political orientation is limited. Greek Orthodox peasantry of all strata in northern Lebanon have, in contrast to the Maronites, long been and continue to be pan-Syrian or pan-Arab nationalists and anti-imperialists. Indeed, it is from among the Greek Orthodox that the early anti-Ottoman Arab nationalists emerged. The coincidence of class and sect is modified by the fact that Muslim capitalists and semi-feudal lords have traditionally joined their Christian counterparts in maintaining Lebanon's regional compradore role and the sectarian structure which had been the principal guarantee of their combined political hegemony. Nevertheless, while there are poor, proletarian and subproletarian Christians, the overwhelming majority are Muslim—Shia and Sunni, and to a lesser extent Druze.

Associated with the rapid development of the Lebanese proletariat—both rural and urban—has been a rise in class struggle in the last ten years. Union organizing was vigorous and violent, as the Lebanese security forces intervened to break up strikes. Workers, in unions or unorganized, agitated for economistic and social welfare demands. One of the key controversial issues has been abolition of Title 50 of the Lebanese Labor Law, which grants the employer the right of arbitrary firing. Social welfare programs, including social and health security, won the previous decade by white-collar unions, were demanded for all workers, including the rural proletariat and the remaining tenant farmers and sharecroppers. The labor union establishment, conservative and reformist, was being pushed by the militant and impatient rank and file. Since the early 1970s wildcat strikes abounded, and radical unions and union leadership grew. The Moscow-oriented Communist Party of Lebanon (CPL) made important strides within the labor movement, as did more left and revolutionary groups. This class conflict—characterized by a militant and rising tide of labor activism and strikes, and countered by more determined state repression—was another factor contributing to social and political polarization in the country and to the civil war.

The development of the labor movement and the class struggle also began seriously to erode sectarian loyalties even

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among the Maronites. This threat was most acutely felt by the conservative Maronite leadership, especially the Phalangists, which proceeded to form conservative unions, and used armed goons to attack radical and militant unions and union leaders. Conservative unions in Lebanon were aided financially and organizationally by Western, including American and German, anti-communist international labor organizations. Also hostile to the militant and radical labor movement was the entire ruling class of capitalists, compradore bourgeoisie, landlords, and their Western capitalist partners. A threat to sectarianism is not only a threat to the ruling class but also to the traditional sectarian-based political leadership with which it overlaps. In short, economic and class transformations polarized the society and threatened the sectarian social-political structure, the basis of ruling-class political control. In particular, the threat to sectarianism was a threat to Maronite political hegemony as inherited from the French mandate period.

Crisis of Compradore Capitalism and Politics

The crisis of Lebanese capitalism deepened in the 1970s as world capitalist inflation translated into double- and triple-digit inflation in Lebanon. This hurt everyone except the rich bourgeoisie, who capitalized on this process with super profits. Scandals over merchants' hoarding of imported staples to force up the price, and over the cost and profits of medicine, further fueled the fires of social and class conflict. The government responded, largely ineffectively, by freezing bread prices and subsidizing bakeries. Rampant inflation in Lebanon telescoped the processes of social polarization and of proletarian, subproletarian, and peasant restiveness. It even eroded the economic base of the petty bourgeoisie, including its Maronite segment. The petty bourgeoisie was being squeezed and was facing ruin and proletarianization.

In this context left and right political movements flourished. Many left-of-center organizations and parties were active illegally until 1968, when the then Interior Minister Kamal Jumblatt—a traditional Druze leader, social democrat, and founder of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), based largely on the Druze

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sect—legalized all left-of-center parties against resistance by all conservative and rightist political leaders.

Left-of-center groups increased rapidly in size and variety. On the far left are several small, militant Marxist-Leninist groups, some of which call themselves Maoists. They are armed and are based mostly on youths, students, ex-students, and unemployed young people. The best organized and largest of the Marxist-Leninist groups is the Organization of Communist Action (OCA) which has close ideological and other links to the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). Another Marxist-Leninist group is the Arab Socialist Action Party (ASAP) which is closely tied with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Domestically, the OCA and ASAP are fairly close in their ideology, which calls for a fundamental transformation of Lebanese society, but they may differ on issues regarding Palestinian liberation strategy, especially the idea of a West Bank state, in a manner similar to the differences between the DFLP and PFLP.

The party with the widest base among the proletariat and peasants of all sects is the CPL. Of long duration in Lebanon, it has made major strides only in the last ten years, as union and class struggles intensified. Although it followed the Moscow political line regarding electoral politics, union activity, and foreign policy in the early 1960s, the CPL became more militant, armed its cadres, and engaged in armed struggle against both Israeli incursions and rightist attacks during the civil war. It also split with Moscow over the Palestinian platform for a secular domestic state in all of Palestine.

Several other parties developed Marxist factions.[19] The best known and most active is the Inam Raad faction of the old Partie Populaire Syrienne (PPS), renamed the Syrian Social National Party (SSNP), which was organized in the 1930s. Anti-imperialist in origin, it called for the unity of greater Syria (thus it is known as Syrian nationalist) and has continuously opposed the Phalangists (Lebanese nationalists and therefore secessionist from greater Syria). The SSNP in all its factions strongly supports the liberation of Palestine, a usurped part of greater Syria. The SSNP has suffered many splits and rises and falls in fortune; however, it continues to play a rela-

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tively important political and armed role in Lebanon. The party is very disciplined and is based among the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie, students, and increasingly urban workers of all sects, especially Greek Orthodox.

Both the Syrian and Iraq Ba'aths have their base in the urban working and Muslim petty bourgeois classes. They too are closely related to equivalent Palestinian groups, the Saiqa and the Arab Liberation Front (ALF), respectively. They are both well funded and well armed because of their respective connections. Anti-imperialist and pan-Arab nationalist, these parties are essentially petty bourgeois socialist, whose program favors building strong state capitalism. In Lebanon the two groups reflect the hostilities of their respective mentors. The pro-Syrian faction is more influential politically because of Syria's influence.

Other political groups on the progressive side tend to be more nationalist and populist rather than radical Marxist. The largest is a group of four independent pan-Arabist and reformist organizations inspired by Nasserism.[20] Largely based in the working classes, the poor Muslim petty bourgeoisie, and Muslim youth and subproletariat of the coastal cities, these movements have developed organized militias during the civil war. They have emerged as a strong, armed and militant grouping on the progressive nationalist side, but they are not disciplined. Their ideology is poorly formulated and they are prone to sectarian appeals. They are strongly pro-Palestinian, especially in Saida and Tripoli. In Tripoli, the October 24 Movement is another, somewhat more radical, group of this kind.

Among the Shia masses, a reformist and religiously led movement, the Movement of the Disinherited, developed in the 1960s. During the civil war, it lost its hold on the Shia masses as varied armed groups and popular defense committees sprang up to lead the urban working-class slum Shia. Additionally, many of the radical parties gained rapidly among these masses. The Shia in Beirut and in rural Lebanon are very strong and sympathetic allies of the Palestinians.

Amidst the social ferment in Lebanon and the dramatic struggles of the Palestinians, many clerics and religious lay groups spoke up for the first time against sectarianism, for social

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reform, and especially for the Palestine cause. Beginning with the June 1967 war, an active, militant, anti-imperialist, and progressive student movement emerged. It demanded armed resistance to the devastating Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon, and called for fundamental reforms in Lebanese society. The student movement was severely and violently repressed by the security forces, and physically attacked by student auxiliaries of the rightist parties, especially the Phalangists. The widespread and violent student upheavals of the early seventies were a prelude to the present crisis.[21]

Thus, in the 1970s there was an intense social and ideological ferment in which politicized groups discussed, debated, and struggled over social, class, and national issues, especially the Palestinian cause. The numbers of people formally in parties and informally active in political causes increased enormously. In the 1972 parliamentary elections, a few of the left-of-center doctrinal parties ran candidates; although singly and collectively they received many votes, none was elected—in part because of the antiquated sectarian electoral laws. The parliament as well as formal political life continued to be dominated by sectarian politicians unrepresentative of and unresponsive to new social and class forces. Some of the traditional Muslim leadership did speak the rhetoric of reform but continued to play the same old game of sectarian politics, favoritism, and corruption. Their social base was being eroded but they seemed oblivious to it.

The economic crisis in the country, the rapid rise of unemployment and underemployment in the form of subproletarianization, and rampant inflation, all speeded the rise of the left, but also quickened the development of the right. The modern Lebanese right, largely Maronite, originated in support of French imperialism. As early as 1936 pro-French Pierre Gemayel organized the Phalangists, a youth organization styled and named after fascist European organizations. With independence, it became a formal political party based largely on the petty bourgeoisie of the Maronite mountain districts. Its political significance emerged only after the 1958 civil war, in which it joined forces with those of pro-Western president Camille Chamoun who sought to integrate Lebanon more

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intensively into Euro-American economic interests and into Western political military alliances. That national struggle also split, although not wholly, along sectarian lines, when the Muslim traditional leadership, pushed by their masses, resisted a pro-Western stance. Ever since then the Phalangists have played an important political role, grown in size, and developed a more extensive militia.[22] But it was beginning in the late 1960s that more rightist organizations and parties with armed militias proliferated. Former president Camille Chamoun's National Liberal Party (NLP) organized a well-armed militia. Even current president Suleiman Franjieh organized, under the leadership of his son, a private militia based on the armed clans of his mountain hometown. Exceedingly Maronite chauvinist, right-wing, and secretive groups, some led by Maronite monks, were formed.[23] These are small, very militant, and often engage in terrorist activities.

Except for the militia of the Zahleh General Union, a coalition of private armies of traditional Greek Catholic political leaders, the rightist parties and armed groups are almost purely Maronite. These are based on the rural and small-town poor, the middle and rich peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie, and on the mobilized (through sectarian appeals) Maronite and other Christian workers.

The ideology and political platform of nearly all these rightist groups is barely formed. Only the Phalange, a more rationally organized political party, has a coherent ideology.[24] All are Lebanese nationalists, hostile to pan-Arab or Syrian nationalists and to the Palestinians whose armed presence has tipped the political scales in favor of the progressive-Muslim social forces. The Phalangist Party is anti-communist, and believes in a free-enterprise economic system, in the sectarian political structure (sectarian democracy), and in a pro-Western foreign policy. In short, the right is pro-imperialist internationally and anti-working class domestically. Since class and national questions in the region are enmeshed, the severe hostility of the right was especially directed at the Palestinian movement.

The development of the internal Lebanese crisis coincided with the rise of the Palestinian movement in the wake of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, as

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elsewhere, rapidly responded to and enrolled in the new armed guerrilla movement. The Lebanese state quickly attempted to impose control over the new armed Palestinian organizations. In 1969, its army became the first Arab army to attack the Palestinian movement. This inconclusive clash was resolved through the Cairo Accords of 1969, which allowed the Palestinians to secure their 17 refugee camps and freedom of movement. The Palestinian movement gained the popular support of the mostly Muslim Lebanese masses, the intellectuals, and the students.

After its costly defeat in Jordan in 1970, the Palestinian movement transferred its base to Lebanon. The Palestinians learned an important lesson from Jordan: never to isolate themselves from the masses and progressive movements of the "host" country, and not to pose as an alternative to these movements. Thus, in Lebanon, a strong alliance was forged between the Palestinians and local groups, and a political Front of Patriotic and Progressive Forces and Parties in support of the Palestinian cause was established under the leadership of Kamal Jumblatt. This front included nearly all the left-of-center groups. The Palestinians on the other hand, by example and practice, helped the growth and development of, and provided an initial armed shield for, the Lebanese progressive movement. This alliance began to change the balance of social forces in the country, a major factor in raising the hostility of the Lebanese right in general and the Phalangists in particular against the Palestinians.

The Lebanese "compradore state," under the presidency of a conservative Maronite, was also hostile to the progressive Lebanese movement, the Palestinians, and the alliance. The state and the rightist parties united against the progressive Lebanese-Palestinian alliance. Indeed, while the state security forces and the army never confronted Israeli army incursions against southern Lebanon, they frequently attacked radical Lebanese formations and the Palestinian guerrillas. In 1973 a brief but savage army attack against the Palestinians drew in the Phalangists. Again it was inconclusive, but it triggered more intensive militarization. Highly publicized private and party militias, particularly on the right, grew by leaps and bounds.

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From the early 1970s onward, the state was increasingly seen by the peasants as an enemy, as it was by the proletariat and the more politicized segments of the subproletariat. Southern villagers took matters into their own hands, arming and organizing themselves in alliance with the Palestinians not only against Israeli attacks, but also against local semi-feudal lords. In this all the radical parties, including the CPL, played a critical role. Thus a fusion of class-sectarian-national questions occurred. The peasants and working classes, mostly Muslim, emerged pro-Palestinian, pan-Arab, anti-Zionist, and anti-imperialist. In this they were joined by other sects, notably Greek Orthodox, and by a segment of the petty bourgeoisie, the intellectuals, and students. Even the Muslim bourgeoisie could hardly deviate from the popular anti-imperialist line of the Muslim masses. This social-political line-up was opposed by the bourgeoisie, the rural and urban petty bourgeoisie, principally Maronite, pro-imperialist, anti-pan-Arabist, anti-Palestinian, and therefore objectively pro-Zionist, and perhaps Christian (i.e., Maronite) chauvinist.

The October War, the Peace Settlement, and the Lebanese Crisis

Internal Lebanese contradictions and the sectarian-class conflict were in the making for nearly a generation. To be sure, the momentum was accelerating in the early seventies, but the pot could have simmered longer before exploding into civil war. What triggered the conflict were the political developments in the wake of the October War of 1973. In particular, the regional Arab-Israeli peace settlement, initiated by the U.S. government and actively supported by important Arab states (Egypt and Syria), refocused pressure on the Palestinians who opposed the settlement. The principal obstacle to this emergent Pax Americana is the Palestine liberation movement. Any such settlement is inevitably to the disadvantage of the Palestinian people, for Palestinian national rights have traditionally been compromised in similar earlier international situations. Thus, the objective strategic interests of the United States, Israel, and the principal Arab states united them against the popularly supported Palestinian movement. There is a recent historical precedent: the Rogers Plan, a regional political settlement put for-

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ward in 1970 by the then U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers, was accepted by the Arab states, notably Nasserist Egypt, and resisted by the Palestine liberation movement. In the context of this intra-Arab contradiction, the political climate was ripe for an attack by the Jordanian army against the Palestinian guerrilla movement whose principal base was then in Jordan. Egypt and Iraq had troops in Jordan, but they stayed on the sidelines, facilitating the Jordanian attack. Only Syria intervened half-heartedly, a controversial move which provoked an internal Syrian struggle that brought to power the right-wing faction of the petty bourgeois state capitalist forces in that country.

The 1973 October war broke the political-military impasse in the Middle East and opened the door for a new Pax Americana with even more willing petty bourgeois regimes. In this latest neocolonial solution, Arab petty bourgeois or state capitalist regimes which were formerly anti-imperialist have become active participants. The "open door" economic policy of Egypt and Syria is the symbol of this willingness. Also, now, the stakes are much higher for U.S. imperialism. Oil and other resources, phenomenal petro-dollar surpluses, and lucrative Middle East markets have made this region a most significant contributor to the American balance of payments and to American corporate and strategic interests. The United States is very interested in a Middle East settlement under its auspices and seeks to neutralize any obstacle to its successful implementation and maintenance. Since the Palestinian movement is the principal obstacle, it must be neutralized or at least contained by finding for it a "safe"—i.e., controlled—niche in the settlement. This is all the more important in view of the international diplomatic successes of the PLO. Neutralizing the popular, mass-supported, and armed Palestinian movement is no easy task. Israeli attacks invariably close Arab ranks behind the Palestinians, threaten a wider war, and possibly superpower involvement. On the other hand, as happened in 1970 in Jordan, an Arab attack could contain or debilitate the Palestinians and split Arab ranks. Arab against Arab is an effective strategy. Lebanese events in 1975 should be seen in this light.

Lebanon, unlike Jordan, has never possessed a strong military or state security apparatus. The attempt of the Lebanese

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regime to crack down on the Palestinians in May 1973 failed. However, where the state failed, an armed counter-revolutionary movement allied with the state might succeed.[25] It could simultaneously impose itself on the Palestinians and deal a setback to their progressive Lebanese allies. Phalangist and right-wing ideological attacks on the Palestinians increased dramatically after 1973. The Phalangist solution to Lebanon's socio-political crisis was the imposition of "law and order" on the left, which was only possible through the "reestablishment of Lebanese sovereignty over all of Lebanon"—a euphemism meaning the elimination of the armed Palestinian presence from Lebanon. When the Phalangist massacre of a busload of Palestinians took place in April 1975, civil war exploded.[26]

The war has since passed through four distinct phases: (1) Phalangists vs. Palestinians, (2) Lebanese right vs. left, (3) partition struggle, and (4) political solution. The first phase ended quickly after a few blows and counterblows, as the progressive forces quickly joined the Palestinians and the left displayed its fighting strength. The second phase, roughly beginning in June 1975 and ending in December, was nearly a purely Lebanese affair. The Palestinians withdrew from the fighting but continued to provide logistical and other support to the left, as did the Lebanese army for the right. During this period, the nature of the fighting also changed. Mobile attacks ceased as both left and right groups and local people's defense committees barricaded city neighborhoods and quarters. Greater Beirut was turned into nearly self-contained armed fiefdoms. The war became static and threatened to turn into a truly sectarian struggle. Both sides were well supplied and well armed.[27]

Perhaps more important for the left, during the second phase operational and ideological coordination developed rapidly (it also did for the right). The Front of Progressive and Patriotic Parties and Forces, under the leadership of Kamal Jumblatt, became an organizational umbrella under which the varied and fragmented progressive groups honed down many of their long-standing political, social, and economic demands into an integrated reform program. One significant point in this program is the democratization, secularization, and rationalization of the political system. This demand directly

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threatened the sectarian political structure upon which Maronite and ruling-class state control rested.[28] By December, after several months of intermittent, devastating, and costly fighting, neither the right nor the left could bring about a decisive military victory. An impasse had set in. Yet the failure of its attempted military "solution" was a political defeat for the right, and it was faced now with a more determined and militarily equal left. The threat to its continuing political-economic dominance stood unveiled.

During this impasse, Syria and France initiated proposals for a political solution. But a new rightist strategy, a plan for the partition of Lebanon, appeared. Abbot Charbel Kassis, the most right-wing Maronite chauvinist, head of the Maronite Order of Monks and of an important rightist militia, requested the French emissary to help bring about partition of Lebanon as a solution to this "religious conflict." The appeal was published in newspapers and plunged the country into renewed political turmoil, thus initiating the third phase. A spontaneous broad political front of Muslim, patriotic, leftist Palestinian and Christian groups—including the Maronite Patriarch, some traditional Maronite political notables, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, and Greek Catholic Archbishops—denounced the idea of the partition of the country. Only the isolated hard-line Maronite rightists, the leaders of the Phalangists, the NLP, and the Maronite Order of Monks, with the indirect support of President Franjieh, continued to threaten partition if the "Lebanese format"—i.e., the National Pact—should be altered.

The letter requesting partition was the ideological statement of a rightist military strategy already underway. The rightists began implementing *de facto* partition by attacking Muslim and Palestinian enclaves, terrorizing residents, and forcing them to flee. This process of attack, eviction, and territorial consolidation was also accompanied by some population exchanges. For the Maronite right, the most important enclave to be cleared was the chain of east Beirut suburban slums and Palestinian camps, known as the "belt of misery," which separates the city's rightist stronghold from the nearby Maronite mountain villages.[29] The fighting quickly escalated throughout the country. Most of Lebanon's territory fell into

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the hands of the progressive forces, aided by some regular Palestinian troops who crossed over from Syria to counter the heavier armament of the Lebanese army units which had joined the side of the rightists. For the Palestinians, the dismemberment of Lebanon into religious states would be an ideological and strategic disaster. Only Israel would benefit from such dismemberment, thus reinforcing its religious base and casting doubt on the proposed democratic secular solution for a new Palestine. Strategically, the whole Lebanese front facing Israel would be severely weakened. Thus the Palestinians, like the progressive Lebanese, were determined to oppose partition of Lebanon.

And yet the impasse continued. The right is not powerful enough, without the organized help of the army, to bring off a military victory over the Lebanese left and its Palestinian allies. The left is also not strong enough to defeat the right without full Palestinian participation. Such a progressive Lebanese/Palestinian victory would necessitate an enormously costly conquest of the Maronite mountain and city strongholds. It would surely involve the Lebanese army on a wide scale. It could invite major Israeli, and therefore Syrian, and possibly Western, armed intervention. The Lebanese left coalition was divided on this, and the PLO saw such a battle as too risky and as a conflict secondary to the main struggle for the liberation of Palestine. The PLO wants neither to rule in Lebanon nor to fight the Lebanese left's battle. Most immediately Syria, the source of much of the progressive forces' supplies, would not support such a conquest. However, more militant Lebanese leftists continue to push for a decisive military victory over the right. Thus there is a latent contradiction between some Lebanese left groups and the PLO. Despite this, it is clear that neither the Palestinians nor the progressive Lebanese can desert the other now.

The political solution of reform worked out in the Syrian intervention in January would not move Lebanon's political system out of the sectarian structure and into a more democratic secular arrangement.[30] However, the Syrian solution did move the conflict out of the military and into the social-political arena for the contending Lebanese groups and disengaged the Pales-

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tinians and their resources from the Lebanese conflict. It may also reduce the conflict's sectarian character, and break down the rapid process of *de facto* partition. The current renewed fighting, the fourth phase, is over the substance and implementation of the Syrian political solution.

The rightist hope for a military victory over the left may have disappeared forever since the Lebanese army began to split apart during the January 1976 fighting. Indeed, the army continued to disintegrate after the cease-fire as desertions and mutinies increased. A small, significant, and growing army movement, calling itself the Lebanese Arab Army, now seems to be independent from central army command and has allied itself with the progressive and patriotic forces against both the right and the central government of rightist president Franjieh. Perhaps it is this threat of the collapse of the army, the last card in the hands of the top military commanders and the Lebanese ruling class, and the continuing intransigence of Franjieh and the right (in relation to the Syrian political solution) that may have prompted the attempted coup of General Abdel-Aziz Ahdab, a Muslim fronting for and acting with the blessings of the Maronite army high command. The rapid parliamentary two-thirds majority vote calling on Franjieh to resign also indicated the apparent fear of the Lebanese establishment, of all sects, of the further collapse of central government. Even Syria is fearful of this final collapse of Lebanese central authority; it has activated its close allies, the Saiqa guerrillas, to block any attack on the presidential palace, hoping in the meantime to work out another political agreement which would break the impasse.

With the subsiding of large-scale fighting, the latent contradictions within the front of progressive and patriotic groups surfaced. The issues that divide them concern the degree of immediate institutional change and the tactics to accomplish such change, and to a lesser extent issues surrounding the status of the Palestinians in Lebanon. Among the left, the contradictions are deeper than among the right, which is smaller in size and has a less diversified sect and class base.

Finally, in connection with the national liberation question

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and the anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist struggles, the civil war in Lebanon, unlike the Jordanian outcome in 1970, neither liquidated the Palestinian movement militarily nor contained it politically. On the contrary, a strong progressive Lebanese/Palestinian alliance was cemented. This is a military/political factor that cannot be ignored even by Syria.

Regionally, the consequences of the civil war and Syria's direct political intervention have strengthened the position of the Syrian state. Syria's moves to mend political fences and create military alliances (because of the Israeli-Egyptian disengagement) with Iraq and Jordan (especially the latter) may compromise its relationship with the Palestinian movement. Additionally, Syria's efforts to protect and help build a strong Lebanese state and army may well conflict with current progressive Lebanese/Palestinian efforts to replace a rightist-dominated state. Syria's political solution gives the right, especially the Phalangists, a political voice greater than it has earned militarily. Indeed, the effort itself sharpened the differences between Syria and the progressive Lebanese/Palestinian alliance, as well as within this alliance.[31] For the Palestinian movement, as for the Lebanese left, an open conflict with the Syrian regime could be fatal.

In conclusion, the Lebanese civil war exploded as a consequence of the interaction of two complex factors: internal and international. The social transformations in the country altered the class and real power relationships and rendered increasingly obsolete the institutionalized sectarian socio-political structure. This structural crisis exploded into civil war in the wake of a U.S.-sponsored Middle East political settlement resisted by the Palestine liberation movement resident in Lebanon and allied with the progressive groups. Perhaps, as the Palestinians believe, the ultimate solution to the Lebanese civil war depends upon a solution to the outstanding Arab-Israeli territorial questions and the Palestinian national problem.

NOTES

1. In much of the Western literature on Lebanon, the term "confessionalism" is used to refer to sectarianism, a socio-political system based on religious sects.

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2. See a bourgeois history by K. Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon,* N.Y.: Praeger, 1965. For the earlier period which includes the rise of the Maronite church see I. F. Harik, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society: Lebanon, 1711-1845,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.
3. See C. Issawi, ed., *The Economic History of the Middle East, 1800-1914,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.
4. L. Meo, *Lebanon: Improbable Nation,* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965, p. 27.
5. I. Smilianskaya, *Al-Harakat Al-Fallahiya fi Lubnan,* Beirut: Dar Al-Farabi, 1972 (in Arabic translated from the Russian, Peasant Movements in Lebanon).
6. The history of the British plan in Palestine and the creation of the Jewish state of Israel are well known. A good introduction is M. Rodinson, *Israel and the Arabs,* N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1969; and I. Abu-Lughod, ed., *The Transformation of Palestine,* Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1969.
7. See a scholarly study of this system and its political modernization by M. C. Hudson, *The Precarious Republic,* N.Y.: Random House, 1968.
8. S. Farsoun, "Working-class Consciousness in Lebanon; Sources and Limitations," paper presented at the Middle East Studies Association meetings, Denver, Colorado, 1971.
9. Their descendants, reportedly over a million, include Senator James Abourezk of South Dakota; Ralph Nader; Danny Thomas; Dr. Michael DeBakey of Texas; and Najib Halaby, former chief of the FAA and later president of Pan Am.
10. This class, along with the compradore bourgeoisie and mercantile capitalists, has developed and reinforced an ideology which sees Lebanon as the economic, cultural, and even diplomatic bridge between the Arab East and the West.
11. See Y. Sayigh and M. Atallah, *A Second Look at the Lebanese Economy,* Beirut: 1966, p. 14 (in Arabic). See also, N. Khalaf, *Economic Implications of the Size of Nations,* Leiden: Brill, 1971.
12. Mission IRFED, *Besoins et Possibilités de Développement du Liban,* Beirut, 1960, p. 33: national income per employed person in the finance sector was L£ 45,500; in commerce, L£ 8,849; in industry, L£ 3,500; and in agriculture, L£ 1,082. See also, E. S. Saba, "The Implications of the Foreign Sector in the Lebanese Economy," *Middle East Economic Papers,* Beirut, 1962, in which he points out that the share of the profit and interest in the trade sector is 85 percent of total income.
13. Mission IRFED, pp. 57, 87; and Sayigh and Atallah, *op. cit.,* p. 14.
14. U.N., *Social Welfare Planning in the Context of National Development Plans,* 1970, p. 14.
15. Mission IRFED, p. 93.
16. S. Farsoun, "Student Protest and the Coming Crisis in Lebanon," *MERIP Reports,* No. 19, August, 1973, pp. 4-8.
17. According to the Ministry of Planning, the agriculture sector will contribute only 9.3 percent of the GNP by 1977, while industry will contribute 14.7 percent and services 73.8 percent. See H. Aly and N.

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Abdun-Nur, "An Appraisal of the Six-Year Plan of Lebanon (1972-1977)," *The Middle East Journal,* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Spring 1975), p. 161.

18. CPL, *Al-Qadiya Al-Ziraiya fi Lubnan,* Beirut: CPL, 1973 (The Agrarian Question in Lebanon).
19. See a description of traditional parties in Lebanon in M. Suleiman, *Political Parties in Lebanon,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967.
20. These include the Socialist Arab Union; the Nasserist Organization, Nasser's Forces; Nasserist Organization, Union of Forces of Working People; and Al-Murabitun, independent Nasserist Organization.
21. S. Farsoun, 1973, "Student Protest . . . ," *op. cit.*
22. J. P. Entelis, *Pluralism and Party Transformation in Lebanon,* Leiden: Brill, 1974.
23. These include the Front of the Cedars Guard, the Cedars Guard, the Cedars Cubs, Maroun's Youths, Adonis' Youth, the militias of the Maronite Order of Monks, of the Maronite League, etc.
24. J. P. Entelis, "Belief-system and Ideology Formation in the Lebanese Kata'ib Party," *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* Vol. 4, No. 2, April 1973, pp. 148-162.
25. In 1973, the former U.S. Ambassador to Laos, G. McMurtrie Godley, the expert in organizing counter-revolutionary and anti-communist private armies there, became ambassador to Lebanon. During his tenure the proliferation and upgrading of private right-wing armies increased enormously.
26. See "Lebanon Explodes," *MERIP Reports,* No. 44. See also *MERIP Reports,* Nos. 30, 31, 37.
27. Supplies for the patriotic and progressive forces came mostly from Syria, Libya, Iraq, and from the Palestinian movement, initially mostly through the Palestinians but later directly to the varied forces. The right reportedly received its arms on the international market, especially from Belgium, and was reportedly financed by the CIA, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Some arms and ammunition captured from the rightists had Israeli Hebrew markings. Pictures of these were displayed in many of the Beirut newspapers.
28. The initial Phalangist slogan of the re-establishment of Lebanese sovereignty was abandoned as the politically isolated right retreated into the slogan of "no alteration in the national pact," the gentlemen's agreement upon which the whole sectarian political structure has been anchored.
29. This battle began with a Phalangist blockade of a Palestinian camp during the 1976 New Year holiday, and included the barbaric sacking of the northernmost Muslim/Palestinian slum district, Karantina or Maslakh, in this belt.
30. The 5/5 instead of 6/5 sectarian political ratio in parliament and the strengthening of the prime minister (Muslim) vis-à-vis the president (Maronite) are merely reflections of the new sectarian-class power relations achieved on the battlefield.
31. Concerning this Syrian policy, an internal Syrian debate has already begun which may be as significant as the struggle that followed Syria's intervention in the Jordanian-Palestinian war of 1970.

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AGAINST CYNICISM IN POLITICS AND CULTURE

BY NORMAN DIAMOND

> Negation was not of the fissures and shortings in our society and culture, only of life and man. McCarthy had been jettisoned, but McCarthyism persisted in the basic assumptions under which we lived. One was free to attack our mores, institutions, personages without limit or fear, so long as one also despaired and offered no alternative.
>
> Herbert Biberman, *Salt of the Earth*

Underlying the gusto, now fading, for the American Way of Life, has always been a strain of skepticism. Red, white, and blue sometimes on some issues, people subjected to "bosses," "bigshots," and "crooked politicians" have been able to maintain a wavering but critical distance from ascendant myths. This relative lack of illusion has often provided radical organizers a foothold, at least to the point of eliciting vocal discontents.

What organizers have also encountered, however, is a further skepticism about the possibility of a significantly better society. Even more widespread, they have found strong doubts

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about the attainability of that better society, whatever its theoretical possibility. Ironical about the glorification of what we have, people have been at least as dubious about the prospects for an alternative. Political scientists in the fifties and early sixties were not far wrong when they claimed that the smooth functioning of "democracy" (which they identified with the present system) requires mass apathy. Ours has been a society founded less on assent than on acquiescence. Skepticism about alternatives has been a conservative bulwark.

But skepticism is far from cynicism. In an important respect, the two are not even commensurable. Skepticism says, "You'll have to show me, otherwise I'm dubious"; it is open to engagement and persuasion. As a widespread outlook, it has been not only a healthy response to the ideological pretensions of this society, but also sometimes an intelligent implicit critique of efforts of the left. Cynicism is a removed perspective, a renunciation of any responsibility. Rather than a necessary transitional stage of cutting ties to this society, as it is sometimes treated by radical organizers who encourage it, it is an attitude rejecting involvement in the social struggle. During the past decade there has been a deepening and spreading social cynicism in the United States. It is true that there is a point beyond which any society is endangered by the disaffection of its members. Yet this growing cynicism is more threatening to prospects for decent change than it is to the status quo. Some disaffection must, of course, be an objective of radical practice. On the other hand, cynicism about politics per se might permit the development of small revolutionary elites but is antithetical to the growth of an active, informed mass movement.

The growing cynicism is an indication of the extent to which the present system is foundering. To a small degree it is also an element contributing to the general crisis, but to a larger extent it may be a means of conservative solution. No one has yet made a convincing argument that objective factors, most prominently economics, all by themselves and exclusive of human effort, are able to transform this society. Either a mass socialist movement, whether it calls itself that or not, will create a new order, or we shall face a reimposition of "national goals" along the same lines as before. These have been the alternatives in the

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past; they are so again now, with an addition. The regrouping of capitalism, if, as seems probable, it occurs, may be significantly harsher to more of the population than has been true in the past few decades.

Cynicism has been the response of a cultural elite. Starting in the sixties with only an incremental impetus due to Watergate, cultural products for mass consumption have stressed the loss, even resignation, of the capacity to act with conviction for social objectives. Insofar as this manifests a weakening of confidence by ruling groups, it is heartening. Most of the population at present seems not cynical but rather uncertain. The democratization of cynicism, its widespread inculcation beyond elites, would be a severe blow to progressive prospects.

Most prominently and increasingly, film has been the vehicle for cynicism. A recent movie, "Coonskin," is worth examining in some depth as the culmination of nearly all the themes and devices of cynicism. Its perception and criticism of the defects and horrors of our social system are in seeming contradiction to its social quiescence. Cynicism is the reconciliation of that contradiction, turning a potentially radical movie profoundly conservative. Picketed by the Congress of Racial Equality for the wrong reasons, it is highly creative technically, interspersing animated cartoons with live footage in tightly written episodes. A scathing social criticism, it strips away any veneer of false hope for progress within U.S. society as now constituted. It also attacks all hopes for *any* significant social change.

As the title is apparently intended to indicate, "Coonskin" is about the situation of black people in the United States. An attempted prison escape by two convicts in the South sets the framework for telling a latter-day version of Brer Rabbit, which has the story-within-a-story characters travel north to Harlem. The original Brer Rabbit was a product of slave culture, a subtle expression of resistance to oppressive conditions, in which a weak but clever trickster is able to outwit stronger foes by seeming to go along with them and by being close enough to take advantage of weaknesses hidden behind their dominance. This form of slave culture manifested resistance in

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a way that enabled continued survival, sometimes with considerable dignity, but did not often threaten the structure of oppression and exploitation. The updated story retains its character of individual resistance joined to acquiescence.

The choice of Brer Rabbit as an approach to present society is the first indication of a sense of futility that soon becomes overwhelming, for it suggests the belief that the situation of blacks has not changed in any meaningful respect since slavery. This perspective explicitly scoffs at the hundreds of years of struggles. It ignores the concrete changes in the social and economic conditions of blacks, the many-times altered relation to the capitalist labor market, the changed social structure of the black community and of the society with which it is intermeshed. Thus it neglects the new possibilities for struggle which altered circumstances always create and ignores the social analysis which is the first priority in figuring out how to change a situation. (Whom to try to reach? To what are they likely to be receptive? What actions do their circumstances permit? What alliances with other groups are possible? What are the obstacles to be overcome and what should be the first targets? etc.) It views blacks only vis-à-vis their race, as an oppressed minority, and not as co-exploited workers along with whites. The racism it sees is racism in the abstract, divorced from social context or particular interests, eternal and unalterable.

Blacks are depicted as an internal colony, subject to insidious influences by the aspirations of the surrounding culture, and with compradore elements who cooperate with the occupying forces. There is a sympathetic treatment of the resistance/adaptation of a colonized people, as in the vignette of an old ragpicker, chortling over his capacity to remain invisible around whites by keeping his eyes lowered and over his resultant wonderful finds in their garbage cans. As he departs, his glee is dampened by the recognition that this has been his life and that his burden simply becomes heavier. Whites are represented only insofar as they directly touch on blacks. Thus, here again there is no social analysis, no attempt to explore why the racism and colonization exist, who benefits from them other than the cops who take the payoffs and the mafia who run the gambling rackets and the brothels. Such questions are unim-

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portant if one starts by believing that change is impossible. Conversely they are crucial if change is to be a prospect.

Rabbit himself is a rare individual, able to rise above the superstitious and socially passive crowd. The vision of society is that of "The Godfather," with individuals acting for themselves and a few friends. There are no goals able to unite a community. There are no political possibilities. In his only explicit political utterance, Rabbit remarks on the total situation: "Segregate, integrate, masturbate"; then something like: "The longer we wait, we gonna end up like Malcolm and King. We got to move and take care of ourselves." This self-serving rhetoric is amplified by the general scorn for politics. All revolutionary effort and intention are portrayed as fraudulent, from the Harlem preacher whose vision of "The Revolution" is akin to Charles Manson's vision of "helter-skelter," and who uses it to line his own pockets, to the recurring little guerrilla.

Guerrilla struggle is depicted as nothing more than an alternative approach to making it with Miss America, to making it in the United States. When almost successful, the guerrilla discovers that it was not worth the effort—"She's got the clap!"—then doesn't make it anyway. There's nothing worthwhile to strive for in this society, and yet the goals of the dominant culture continue to shape all efforts. Exceptional individuals can win, but the value of what they win is dubious. At the end of the story-within-a-story, Rabbit, Bear and Fox, triumphantly reunited, head away, we don't know where, not to conquer new worlds but with the feeling of not having accomplished much. We then are flashed back to the prison escape which presumably succeeds, although all but one are shot. We see them shot; we are left in some doubt about the escape's success and about whether it was worthwhile.

"Coonskin" shows much in present society that readily lends itself to cynicism. We see white entrepreneurs encouraging and capitalizing on the market for anti-white sentiment. We see political fakers who pretend to be revolutionaries. We see a society with restricted possibilities, worthless goals, and cooptation when repression doesn't suffice. "Coonskin" graphically shows us all this and then, in effect, sits back and says: "That's how it is and how it's going to remain."

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The film itself has been accused of being racist. Considering the existence of different groups with quite diverse analyses, goals, and strategies, as well as a deep sensitiveness to the issue, any film in which race is a central concern, whatever its content and merit, is certain to be considered racist by somebody. "Coonskin's" own understanding of the term does not aid clarity. After Rabbit has tricked the brutal white cop Maddigan into self-destruction, either the narrator or Rabbit remarks that it was taking advantage of Maddigan's racism that made possible his defeat. In fact it was Maddigan's lust and not his racism. He worked for and played a key role in a racist system, but this was not the instrument of his death. Such a casual use of the concept amounts to little more than name-calling, playing on the audience's sympathies and uncertainties rather than encouraging their critical judgment.

Blacks are represented as being fully as capable as whites, neither innately inferior nor (the usual alternative stereotype) with their own enviable and unique attributes that justify maintaining them in subordinate positions. Nor are blacks idealized. We are shown repeated instances of exploitation of blacks by blacks. Rabbit takes over the rackets in Harlem and takes free rides on the women in the brothels when he comes for his payoffs. The film uses the device of exaggerating racially stereotyped physical features and behavior to mock the stereotype, though this brings with it its own dangers. In selective exaggeration, part of the stereotype slips through the screen of mockery and is implicitly accepted. In particular, black women are portrayed throughout as passive objects, rewards for male activity.

For part of the audience there is a chance that Rabbit will be admired, and this risks glorifying a form of resistance to racism and oppression that is only an individual adaptation. "Coonskin" is not racist in any narrow sense. It is racist in that it accepts and encourages us to accept a society permeated with racism that is employed to keep us all down. Inseparable from and more fundamental than its racism is its cynicism.

There is perhaps another useful way to approach "Coonskin." Let us acknowledge that it does not disguise some of what is wrong with this society, and ignore for the moment that

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it does disguise and hinder the possibility of effective action toward alternatives. It correctly sees that the problems it exposes are basic to the way the society is structured rather than the result of individual inadequacies or the decisions of bad ruling groups. Its approach is thus in terms of the total system instead of the unfortunately widespread conspiratorial understanding which would focus merely on replacing people in power. It recognizes that people living in poor conditions are a fundamental feature of this society and that violence is not an occasional, external occurrence but part of the squalor and poverty of everyday lives. Again leaving aside its overt cynicism, let us ask what is accomplished toward combating the evils by their mere exposure. Does pure and simple muckraking represent *progress if it does not explicitly raise the possibility of fundamentally* different and more desirable social arrangements, or if it does not offer alternative ways to think about social possibilities than those now common? No, muckraking is not radical.

Exposé and criticism alone, however basic their subject matter, leave intact the framework of understanding which shapes how we approach solutions to the problems exposed. That framework, our premises about people's capabilities, about human nature, and about social possibilities, is at present predominantly a conservative force. Fundamentally changing it must be the objective of all radical practice. Ultimately it will take living in a better society to reinforce an outlook of greater comprehension and higher expectations. Our efforts toward changing that outlook now, however, are crucial for getting to that better society.

Low expectations and skepticism are encouraged by present social conditions. Hierarchical work situations with narrow, wearing tasks, meaningless to individual workers; the low value placed on integrated, non-specialized labor, whether it is housework or medical; manipulated leisure to ensure little more than recuperation of work faculties and consumption of goods; the discouragement and channeling of political participation; explicit socialization in school and through mass media; all of these are factors hindering people's awareness of their own

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capability to understand their society and act effectively to change it.

Human nature as aggressive and greedy, a genuinely democratic society (egalitarian and run knowledgeably and effectively by all the people in it) as a utopian impossibility, our own society as unchanging and too strong to be worth trying to overcome: this is the skepticism which has been a conservative bulwark. It ensures that solutions are sought only within the confines of the same basic premises. Those premises already contain their conclusion, the continued existence of this society. This may be what Rabbit had in mind when he rejected both the alternatives of integration and segregation. The major social questions have no satisfactory answer within the confines of this society. Muckraking does not challenge those confines or that basic skepticism.

An opposite political stance, avoiding the cynicism which the film now epitomizes and transcending its mere muckraking, would not have to cost "Coonskin" the merits which it does possess. Without violating artistic integrity or being didactic, retaining its social criticisms, retaining and even enhancing its humor and pathos, with no need artificially to ennoble or glorify any people, social group, or class, it could have been an excellent political contribution. As it stands, there are hints and glimmerings of better directions, but they are gratuitous, undeveloped, almost as if the director wanted to assure us of his progressive sympathies in spite of the film. When we see the cartoon image of the white mafia leader in his subway headquarters, it is superimposed on footage of workers in a mill. As Bear fights his way to the heavyweight championship under mafia sponsorship, knocking out both whites and blacks, the narrator tells us that "Bear learned to beat his brothers." In the prison escape, the younger convict risks being shot in returning to help the elder, who wasn't even going to make the attempt.

Instead of accepting this society and substituting a despairing temperament for analysis, the film could have aided our understanding. It could have explored and graphically helped us see the social causes behind the ills to which it is now resigned. It could have alerted us to underlying social and economic factors making for change in the society (for such factors

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exist in all societies) so we could take a hand in shaping the direction of that change. If the specifics of such an analysis were beyond the skills of its author, the film could at least have emphasized the importance of developing those skills. It could have suggested the areas of common interest and the potential for alliance of different social groups. Instead of denying all history as it does, it could have encouraged a sense of history, a recognition that societies are neither eternal, immutable, nor wholly predetermined. Our society has changed in the past, will continue to change, and, given appropriate efforts at key junctures, could have developed differently than it has. Again, none of this need be dry or pedantic. These are abstractions which could be worked with at least as creatively as those the film now embodies. There is nothing inherently more artistic in resignation and cynicism than in hopeful and intelligent striving.

An important first step in radical strategy must be social analysis, and not only because effective strategy presupposes accurate understanding of what we are up against. One key means of overcoming the socially imbued sense of incapability is by beginning to be able to comprehend our society, to see through the obfuscations and mystifications. Film could aid significantly, although there are of course limits to the social analysis that can be read in books or imparted by organizers and artists. This is true partly because, as with anything, participation in changing it is prerequisite to understanding it fully. There is much that we cannot learn about this society, about its flexibility and where it will not bend and must be broken, until we have a strong mass movement capable of probing and testing and securing its gains. But film and other artistic media can be important in involving people initially, and in digesting and consolidating what we learn as a base for going further.

For art to suggest that a better society is a real possibility does not require the explicit portrayal of that society nor that the artist be committed to one fully worked-out vision of the future. There are other ways to present alternatives. Within this society there are people tentatively joining together, attempting to be self-conscious actors rather than the objects of forces be-

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yond their control. Sensitive and supportive treatment of the difficulties and limits of such efforts is a challenge worthy of the highest talent. Uncritical cheer-leading or bland optimism would be worse than useless. We lack in literature and art very many plausible representations of worthwhile change, of people realizing—becoming aware of and acting on, and thus recognizing even more—their hitherto doubted capabilities relevant to social change. Exploring this theme could not only be a boost to people's sense of what is possible, but also a contribution to our sense of how to make it happen.

Real alternatives *are* possible, but they will not develop of their own accord. If it is widespread, cynicism becomes self-fulfilling. Overcoming cynicism, at least partly transcending the resignation and the aloofness, is a prerequisite to beginning to eliminate the social conditions which breed political despair. Our efforts have a chance to make a difference.

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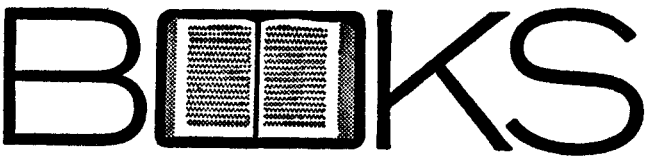

SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF MONOPOLY IN THE AUTO INDUSTRY

By Michael Moffitt

American Ground Transport: A Proposal for Restructuring the Automobile, Truck, Bus and Rail Industries, by Bradford C. Snell. Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973 (27-540-0); paperback, $1.40.

No one would deny the tremendous advance in personal mobility made possible by extensive use of the private automobile. Apart from its accompanying physical and cultural impacts, the automobile stands alongside the railroad and airplane as a truly revolutionary force in human history. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine an industrial society without these mechanized modes of transport.

But this is only half of the story. For we are not simply dealing with a bare technological phenomenon but rather with technology in its social and historical context—the only meaningful context in which technology can be understood. Specifically, we are considering the automobile (and all vehicles driven by internal combustion engines) in the context of a capitalist economy where technology is not a mere means of human advancement, but an object of profit-making activity.

It is against this background that Bradford Snell's important study, *American Ground Transport,* must be considered. Snell is

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counsel to the Senate Subcommittee on Antitrust and Monopoly which, under the direction of Senator Philip Hart, has been investigating monopolistic industries (such as the auto industry) with an eye to breaking them up into what are euphemistically referred to as "competitive" industries. This very valuable study is unusually short (103 pages), very tightly constructed, and is thoroughly documented (500 footnotes). According to the author, this is "a study of the social consequences of monopoly." It attempts to show that "excessive economic concentration can restructure society for corporate ends." (p. 1) The focus is the behavior of the three large American automobile makers—General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler—which account for 95 percent of the autos manufactured in the United States. (The fourth, American Motors, accounts for about 5 percent of the market and is thus largely irrelevant.)

The development of the American auto industry is what Paul Sweezy has called the "classic illustration of the laws of capitalist accumulation."* Snell's task is to show that, as this industry passed from the competitive to the monopoly or "tight oligopoly" stage of development, behavior of the firms which dominate it changed in basic ways. Price competition was no longer in the interest of rival firms. Violating a canon of traditional micro-economics, corporations began to take notice of the impact of their own behavior and that of competitors on market conditions. Ford and Chrysler, for example, have long recognized GM as the auto industry's "price leader" and have seldom broken ranks over prices set by the latter. Technological and capital requirements being enormous in such an industry, high barriers to entry discourage other firms from trying to enter. The result is that these three giants have pursued a strategy which Snell terms "joint profit maximization." "According to a recent estimate by the Federal Trade Commission," he notes, "9 million purchasers of domestic 1972 automobiles paid $2.1 billion, or more than $230 per car in shared monopoly overcharges" to the Big Three. (p. 13)

As control passes from the market to the few firms which dominate it, non-price behavior changes as well. First of all, choosing from only a limited number of producers of given commodities restricts the range of products available. For example, Snell demonstrates that until 1970 none of the Big Three introduced a compact in the American market able to compete with larger, more expensive vehicles. They did this even at the cost of losing

* "Cars and Cities," *Monthly Review* (April 1973), p. 5.

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a good share of the U.S. market to foreign models. Secondly, manipulation of consumers becomes a major tool of corporate policy in the stage of monopoly. As Fisher, Grilliches, and Kayser calculated for earlier years,* Snell documents that "consumers paid an estimated $1.6 billion, or $170 per car, to defray the costs of model changes" in 1972. Needless to say, most of the changes were not devoted to safety or improved performance, but instead to the production of "cosmetically restyled versions of last year's offerings." (pp. 13-14)

Of course, this sort of manipulation would be inconceivable without massive advertising, a major stimulant of the level and composition of effective demand. Until very recently, reflecting the insight of Henry Ford II that "minicars make mini-profits," this has meant promoting large, gas-guzzling, private cars. As late as mid-1973, the Big Three (who now piously support energy conservation in public) were still devoting over 90 percent of their advertising revenues to "standard (large) and intermediate-sized cars." (p. 15)

But is this the end of it? Are Americans simply dupes of Madison Avenue and Detroit? The answer is that most of them have no choice, that at present there is an absence of alternatives, and that at bottom this has been central to the strategy of the auto industry all along. Here, monopoly power over the automobile itself was but a prerequisite. It was then necessary to do what economists call horizontal integration into other forms of transportation, to suppress competition with the auto, and to exercise broad influence over public transportation policy.

The first of these aims has long since been achieved. In addition to autos, the Big Three produce 84 percent of American-made trucks. GM alone accounts for over 75 percent of all city buses, and its lone competitor in producing inter-city buses purchases "major mechanical components" exclusively from GM. The latter also manufactures all passenger locomotives and 80 percent of freight locomotives. (p. 26) But since automobiles are vastly more profitable for transporting people and trucks for moving freight, GM has only limited interest in bus and rail transportation. Their function is to service 20 percent of the population unable to own or operate cars, and to move freight where the substitution of trucks is not feasible. But both have had their day

* This work is discussed by Baran and Sweezy in *Monopoly Capital* (Monthly Review Press, 1966), pp. 135-139.

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in overall GM strategy. In a chain of seedy and often conspiratorial maneuvers beginning in the late 1920s, GM (with the aid of Standard Oil of California and Firestone Tire) was "involved in the replacement of more than 100 electric transit systems with GM buses in 45 cities, including New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, St. Louis." (p. 32) And using its power as a huge shipper of freight, the company coerced many rail carriers to dieselize their lines and refused to ship freight over those that remained electrified. But in the long run, diesel carriers fought a losing battle against the subsidized trucking industry.

At the end of the Second World War, during which GM and Ford were an integral part of the war effort (on both sides), the second great wave of "automobilization" overtook the country, largely as a result of federal and local government subsidies to the construction of highways and suburban development.* This direction of public policy gave added impetus to the exodus from the central cities and contributed, in large part, to their decline as residential centers and their eventual physical decay. This mass suburban development added a new dimension to what Paul Sweezy has called "a locational pattern that implies a universal separation of residence and work." Given the absence of alternative modes of transportation, people became locked into the use of the automobile as a way of life with the result that now "their need for cars is as real as their need for jobs."**

The lesson to be learned from the history of the automobile is the following: under capitalism, the ultimate purpose of technology is profit, not use. Even the most supremely rational innovation is, at a given point, turned into its opposite: total irrationality from society's standpoint. Among the most glaring forms of this irrationality: decades after the automobile has become the dominant mode of transportation in urban areas, mobility has actually *declined.* In cities during rush hours, to cite an extreme case, the average speed of traffic is 12 miles per hour. (pp. 48-49) When this point is reached, it is clear that technological innovation no longer serves to liberate humans from their physical and spatial constraints, but instead, in Marx's words, "belong[s] to a state of society, in which the process of production has the mastery over man, instead of being controlled by him."

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* Baran and Sweezy, *Monopoly Capital,* pp. 244-246.

** "On the Irrelevance of Bourgeois Economics," MR (October 1972), p. 6.

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This is a situation extending far beyond Snell's recommendations—a supercharged version of antitrust policy—which, by the way, constitute a conclusion unworthy of an otherwise fine piece of work.

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NORMAN BETHUNE IN MUSKOKA

Dr. Norman Bethune, the subject of MR Press biography *The Scalpel, the Sword,* by Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon, was a hero of the Spanish Republic and the Chinese Revolution, immortalized in Chairman Mao Tse-tung's "In Memory of Norman Bethune" which has become one of the most frequently quoted texts of Chinese Communism. Gravenhurst, Bethune's home town in Canada, however, had a slightly different perception of its most famous son. The following item is reprinted in its entirety from the September-October, 1975, issue of *This Magazine*, an excellent radical bi-monthly (subscriptions $4.00 Cdn/$4.50 U.S. Address: 56 Esplanade St. East, Toronto, Ont., Canada).—THE EDITORS

As a contribution to the rediscovery of Norman Bethune by the Canadian media, we reproduce an overlooked editorial from last summer's *Muskoka Sun*. The *Sun* is published in Gravenhurst, Bethune's birthplace, where the former Bethune home was recently established as a historical shrine.

A new dimension is being added to Muskoka interest with the establishment in Gravenhurst of a "Bethune Shrine," in the house where Norman Bethune was born in 1890.

The life of this enigmatic Canadian in Gravenhurst was very brief. He was born there, during the short Presbyterian pastorate of his father, and the family moved away three years later. But the adoption of this location as the shrine can be traced to the traditional Chinese reverence for the birthplace of a person, and to the fact that it was in China that Norman Bethune achieved heroic stature.

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Canada is now granting recognition to a man who was indeed a giant, *though a very impatient one,* in many fields. His medical career would have been brilliant, if he had possessed the willingness to cooperate and take time with his colleagues. His endeavors as a humanitarian,* though spasmodic, were noble, and culminated in his work in China that brought him reverence and fame. His proposals in several lines, such as medical insurance,** were years ahead of his time. But his impatience and lack of perseverance instead made him, by Canadian conventional standards, a failure. He was also a man of magnetic personality —and a very lonely one.

It has been the influence of Chinese friends that has brought more focus to bear on this Canadian. Pilgrimages to his birthplace in Gravenhurst resulted first of all in marked inconvenience to the resident United Church Minister, and then in a realization that Canada had failed to understand a man who was accorded such stature in another land. The establishment, now, of a shrine which will include restoration to a home typical of the 1890's as well as a place for Bethune documents and papers, points the way to a recognition of a notable Canadian, not perhaps a successful one, but a man who made praiseworthy contributions to the world in his lifetime. Our "heroes" are not all victors, and in recognizing others we are showing awareness of the quality of humanity in the life of Canada.

This also marks a new development in Muskoka interest. Our first attraction to visitors was the natural beauty of the lakes, hills and forests. This was then developed to afford comfortable, even luxurious, vacation accommodations, then recreational facilities. There has been a marked increase in artistic programs, to enjoy as spectators or participants, that has widened the interest. And the new Muskoka attraction that will come to Gravenhurst heralds another dimension, and a proud one, to Muskoka living.

Poor Norman. He never made a success of himself. True, a billion people around the world know *only* one Canadian name, and it is Bethune, but if he'd settled down in Montreal, or Toronto, or Gravenhurst, he might have got a good practice going.

This is certainly a hysterically bourgeois way of approaching Bethune, but there is also something peculiarly Canadian about it. He is not discredited, nor disowned—as, for instance, the American media might treat one of *their* prodigals. He is

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* Read "revolutionary."

**Read "socialized medicine."

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pitied, and above all, not understood. He was so "enigmatic," "spasmodic," and "lonely." They do not know what to make of Bethune; they are as perplexed as the United Church minister must have been when the yellow peril came tramping through his study.

But at least Muskoka has a "new attraction," along with the trees, cottages, and summer theatres already there. The editorialist is not sure what it is, but it adds "another dimension, and a proud one." More specific he cannot be; he hasn't quite cottoned on to what the fuss is all about. Norman Bethune's townsmen—and his countrymen for that matter—will have to figure out the meaning of it without his help.

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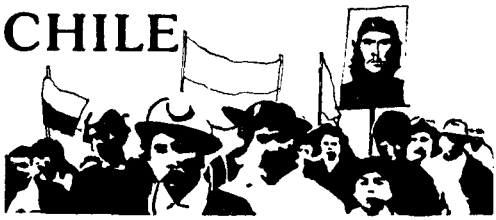

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CORRESPONDENCE

ON "REVOLUTIONARY BACKWARDNESS"

I

The author of the letter on "Revolutionary Backwardness" (MR, October 1975) presents, I feel, an unusually sensitive and sincere starting point for trade union discussion. To begin with, "booing and yelling and throwing chairs at union meetings" is one level of militancy. Exposing and defeating specific misleaders on specific class issues and waging effective class warfare on the favorable terrain of the shop floor is quite another level.

"Unions are still viewed as legitimate defense organizations for the class struggle, though bureaucratically deformed." Precisely. We can also add ideologically blunted and historically profoundly influenced in its setting of the most powerful bourgeoisie in history. If there is any historical force to replace trade and industrial unionism in this country, it has yet to make its appearance, and to my knowledge American workers are not looking forward eagerly to replacement of their unions with some new esoteric forms. Unionism is an established fact of American life, and will be with us for quite some time to come.

It is a profound conceptual weakness when Grevin says that unions are "the defense mechanism *provided* by the system." Provided indeed! One should read a bit of Philip Foner, William Foster, or the Knights of Labor to find out how obligingly the system "provided" the workers with unions. They emerged (without foundation grants, if you please) on the backs and blood of many workers gone before. And all the collaborationist "sweetheart" babble going around by the labor "statesmen" notwithstanding, maintenance of viable unionism is contingent upon the con-

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sciousness of the men and women it defends. The memories of how very well the system operated *without* unions is quite indelibly ingrained in the consciousness of the American proletariat.

On the question of "contesting positions of leadership" and "building a base in the unions": historically the revolutionary builds a base not particularly to contest positions of leadership per se but in order to contest the position of his class. Revolutionaries in the shops, to say the least, do not overwhelmingly have positions of "leadership" and perhaps never decisively have had them. However, based on their credibility, reliability, and commitment to "old-fashioned" militant unionism they have been known to command remarkable influence over hundreds or even thousands of fellow workers. I have personally seen that. Even "pie-card" business-union types need, to some extent, a "base" touching the shop floor. Their maintenance of power is based, to a significant degree, on delivery of improvements and concessions to one or another section of their bargaining unit. Trade-union bureaucrats on steward and committee levels are remarkably attentive when reminded of this.

I am agreed that the left is in a state of flux and disunity, and that this has its effect on revolutionary politics. Specifically what revolutionary politics does the writer have in mind? Take the "revolutionary politics" of the New York rank-and-file taxi workers group. This group is not atypical and, as I know from my personal experience, hurls mindless slogans of workers power, nationalization, and worker ownership into a union election campaign. And never wins. Even against a fragile and thoroughly discredited leadership. Of course not. What working taxi driver would give credence to such off-the-wall slogans at this point? Socialism, dear comrade, for better or for worse, is not on the bargaining table. It is not in the province of one or another capitalist to grant socialism. Just "minor" things like safety, wages, pensions, etc., and, oh yes, a measure of dignity as a worker. Further along, one should consider the profound collaborationist trap in one or another "worker-owned" industry as opposed (sic!) to a worker-owned society, i.e., socialism.

The question of giving the workers a revolutionary perspective is the stated goal, it seems to me, of revolutionaries of many different persuasions. The question is really *how* and *what* to do and, in my experience, it is never all that easy. Certainly things are not quite so pat in the working class proper as they are in the universities. Beyond that, it seems that the left itself

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is trying to muddle its way along a post-Vietnam course and has very little perspective for itself, let alone for the proletariat.

In terms of revolutionary consciousness, the writer views with horror the possible circumstances of a revolutionary situation without a revolutionary proletariat. An interesting thought. A dialectical approach would hold that there are possibilities for great sudden leaps in mass consciousness when the situation demanded it. This has happened in all the great revolutions. Why shouldn't this hold for the American proletariat?

Ira Lombrozo

Brooklyn, New York
December 1975

II

I am writing this letter in response to Robert Grevin's essay in the Correspondence section of MR (October 1975) on revolutionary backwardness. I was especially pleased to see such an essay by a blue-collar worker addressing some of the critical problems facing the American left today. But I was disappointed to find that Grevin's essay raised questions which I have posed to myself without helping me to answer them. I am a black student who was heavily influenced by the so-called "New Left" movement of the 1960s. I entered college in 1971 with only a vague understanding of radicalism, fed by what I understood about the problems of blacks in America and by my understanding of what the antiwar movement had been. Over the years I have refined my perception of radicalism and progressively increased my commitment to revolution and a socialist America. My biggest problems have been, and continue to be, developing what Grevin referred to as "organic ties" with the working class and deepening my understanding and application of Marxism.

Developing such organic ties with the working class has always been a particularly difficult problem for left-wing parties and individuals in the United States. Needless to say, the disintegration of the New Left has not made that task any easier. I have found myself confronted with a multitude of sectarian political groups, none of which has any significant popular support or "organic" ties with the working class. I still cannot say that I understand all of the theoretical niceties that divide these groups and make them so antagonistic to one another. Moreover, I have yet to find one which seems capable of establishing

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the ties Grevin mentions, even where the desire exists. Nor can I reconcile myself to the amazing rigidity, fanaticism, and hierarchy which exist to one degree or another in most of these groups. I then thought that it might be possible to develop the organic ties as an individual while still searching for the political group that seemed to be heading in the right direction. But, as Grevin seems to understand, the work places are controlled to an amazing degree by the union and management. One may enter only as a worker, an agent of the union, or an agent for management. I have seriously considered entering as a worker, but the type of frustrations Grevin encountered with the union, with left-wing parties and—additionally—my anticipation of the same type of paralyzing isolation I am currently trapped in deterred me. The unions are so heavily bureaucratized that most reacted to my inquiries with amazement. Apparently the unions want only certain types of people—perhaps anticipating a sudden surge of radicals looking for access to the workplaces.

The scope of this problem is at times truly staggering. I am sure that there are a number of people in my position: individuals who are committed to working for revolution but who are not affiliated with any party or "armchair" study group; individuals who are flexible with respect to theory, who are young and without major financial or family commitments; individuals who are educated and/or have specific skills to bring to the movement. For these people the question is and always has been: Where is the forum in which we can work and learn, with revolution as our primary objective? Grevin's essay explains very well what the objective is, but the problem of getting there is still with me. The situation becomes more critical with every year that passes because I must ultimately make a decision about the extent to which there is a revolutionary movement organized enough to absorb my skills and deal with my inexperience. I have a feeling that with the passing of every year the movement loses many people like me, especially those who have the option of moving into the "mainstream" American life style. I do not want to become one of these casualties. As a result, I have questions that urgently require answers or at least some advice. I wish that Grevin or someone else would address these issues in a future issue of MR.

Janis L. Harwell

Chicago, Illinois
November 1975

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(*Continued from inside front cover*)
increase of close to 33 percent in six months, the biggest percentage increase in any comparable period since the early days of the magazine in 1949.

We would like to believe that these gratifying results reflect a general increase in interest in socialism and the Marxian interpretation of national and world events, though unfortunately there is no way of finding out whether or not this is true. Still, some of the letters received from the new subscribers certainly point in that direction. Here, for example, is what a new subscriber in California writes: "Your solicitation for my subscription came this morning, and I am sending you my check this afternoon. I get more damn requests to subscribe to rag magazines, so you must understand that it is something of an unusual event for me to respond with such alacrity. I was just taken with your description of MR and with the comments cited in approbation of the magazine. Furthermore, I am in a period in which I am just beginning to be exposed to the fundamental truths of socialist thought, and it was an astounding coincidence that you sent me your note at such a fortuitous time. If this prescience also characterizes your political analysis, as your readers' comments would lead me to believe, then I have good reason to look forward to a very profitable and enjoyable subscription." We would only add that in deciding on the contents of the subscription appeal we were thinking precisely of people with the state of mind of this correspondent, and in effect betting that there would turn out to be quite a few of them. Apparently we were right. One more point in this connection: we would like to hear from our new subscribers and especially to have their suggestions for improving the magazine.

A new journal which recently appeared should be of interest to many MR readers: *The Radical Teacher: a Newsjournal of Socialist Literary Theory and Practice.* "We have our roots," the inaugural editorial says, "in the Radical Caucus in English and Modern Languages, but we wish to be open to other disciplines, rather than accepting the self-imposed divisions of standard academic journals. Our hope is also to address students, both graduate and undergraduate; all teachers of whatever level, those in public schools, those instructing students, those in various alternative institutions around the country." Vol. 1, no. 1 makes a good start; and if the editors can keep it up, *The Radical Teacher* could fill a very real gap in the literature of the U.S. left. One of the pieces in this issue is an excellent review by Igor Webb of books by two British working-class novelists, Robert Tressell and Jack Common. Webb remarks that Tressell's classic *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists* is "unavailable from a U.S. publisher." That is true now, but older readers of MR will recall that a hard-cover edition was published by MR Press in 1962 (reviewed by W. H. Ferry in MR, March 1962). Unfortunately sales were not strong enough to warrant reprinting when the first edition was exhausted. But we would be delighted to bring out a new paperback edition if there were evidence of sufficient demand for classroom use.

From time to time we receive a bequest from a reader who felt, in his or her lifetime, that financial support would help make possible the continuance of MR as a completely independent magazine. Any reader who may be moved to follow this example should be careful to state exactly, in the will, that the bequest is to: "Monthly Review, Inc., presently of 62 West 14th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011."

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Monthly Review Press announces a new book:

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